

2011-101 AUDIT SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES—Department of Social Services' Child Protective Services

The audit by the State Auditor's Office will provide independently developed and verified information related to CPS programs in the four largest counties by population (or any other criteria the State Auditor deems appropriate), one selected from each of the State's four regions—Northern California, Bay Area, Central California, and Southern California—and would include, to the extent practical, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Review and evaluate the laws, rules, and regulations significant to the audit objectives.
2. Review the DSS' role in providing counties guidance and assistance aimed at preventing child abuse. Determine the extent to which DSS monitors the counties' compliance with policies and procedures designed to prevent child abuse. In reviewing DSS' role, policies, and procedures, identify areas where DSS could better communicate with the counties, provide better oversight, and prevent future tragedies in the area of child abuse.
3. For the past five years, identify the major categories of expenditures (e.g., administrative expenditures, personnel expenditures for social workers/case workers) for the CPS programs at the four counties. Additionally, identify the number of social or case workers and the caseload per social or case worker during those years. Finally, compare these caseload ratios to available standards.
4. Determine the extent to which the counties have measured the impact any budget reductions have had on their ability to provide services including, but not limited to, direct welfare program services, such as child visitations and investigations of child abuse and neglect. Further, determine what adjustments the counties have made in response to any budget reductions.
5. Review and assess each county's CPS policies and procedures designed to protect children from abuse, especially their policies and procedures aimed at ensuring that a child is not placed in the custody of an inappropriate foster parent (e.g., child molester, child abuser, substance abuser, and decertified foster parent). Review and evaluate a sample of placements at each county for compliance with its procedures for ensuring that a child is not placed in the custody of an inappropriate foster parent. For a sample of placements in which the county has removed children from inappropriate foster parents, evaluate the county's efforts and timeliness in removing those children.
6. For the most recent three years for which information is readily available, identify and analyze the following information on reports of neglect or abuse in each of the four counties:
 - a. The total number of reports.
 - b. The disposition of reports.

- c. The amount of time it took counties' CPS staff to visit and make contact with the subjects of reports.
- 7. Review and assess each county's CPS policies and procedures related to visiting children's residences. Sample CPS cases that required visits and determine whether each county complied with its policies and procedures and state law.
- 8. For the most recent three years for which information is readily available, review and assess the following information on deaths of children who were in each of the four counties' CPS system:
 - a. The total number of children deaths.
 - b. The cause of death.
 - c. Demographic information on the children, including age, gender, ethnicity, and location.
 - d. The number of deaths in homes that counties' CPS staff found to be inappropriate placements, such as homes occupied by known child molesters or abusers, or are decertified foster homes.
 - e. For any placements that were determined to be inappropriate, determine whether the placement was in a licensed facility that had prior complaints on file with DSS. Further, determine any actions taken by the licensing agency in response to complaints.
 - f. A description of the person caring for the child at the time of death, such as a biological or foster parent.
 - g. The number of children with reports of neglect or abuse on file in the prior two years and the timing of those reports relative to their deaths. For these prior cases, separately identify the number of children with open CPS reports or cases and those with prior reports or cases of neglect or abuse that were closed.
- 9. For the past three years, review any evaluations the counties in the sample may have conducted on themselves subsequent to the death of a child while in their respective CPS program. Further, determine whether the counties participated on the team that reviewed a death of a child that occurred within their jurisdiction. If the counties did not perform a subsequent self-evaluation, determine whether the counties complied with policies, procedures, best practices, and laws prior to each child's death.
- 10. During the course of the audit, identify and highlight any models, policies, and programs that are successful and would enhance other counties' efforts to prevent child abuse or neglect.

11. Review and assess any other issues that are significant to counties' efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect.